

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STOCKH 02587 291145Z

51

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, EFIN, SW

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER RAISES POSSIBILITY OF EARLY ELECTIONS

REF: (A) STOCKHOLM 1076 (B) STOCKHOLM A-113

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. PRIME MINISTER OLOF PALME THIS WEEK RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS THIS COMING AUTUMN IF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE BOURGOISE OPPOSITION PARTIES ARE UNABLE TO AGREE ON CERTAIN ECONOMIC LEGISLATION. ANSWERING A TELEVISION CORRESPONDENT'S QUERY ON MAY 26 ABOUT THE INABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE OPPOSITION TO AGREE ON THE MEASURES, PALME REPLIED THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE NECESSITY OF DECIDING IMPORTANT ECONOMIC POLICY QUESTIONS BY THE DRAWING OF LOTS, DUE TO THE 175-175 SPLIT IN THE RIKSDAG (PARLIAMENT) BETWEEN THE SOCIALIST AND NON-SOCIALIST PARTIES, ADDING THAT "THE GOVERNMENT HAS DISCUSSED THE SITUATION AND FINDS THAT THIS IS ABOUT ALL WE CAN TAKE." PALME'S INTIMATION OF NEW ELECTIONS WAS ECHOED BY SOCIAL

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PAGE 02 STOCKH 02587 291145Z

DEMOCRATIC PARTY SECRETARY STEN ANDERSSON, WHO TOLD THE

PRESS THAT "NEW ELECTIONS HAVE NEVER BEEN CLOSER THAN THEY ARE TODAY."

2. THE ISSUE WILL BE DECIDED ON FRIDAY, WHEN THE RIKSDAG VOTES ON THE ECONOMIC LEGISLATION. THE IMPLICATION OF THE GOVERNMENT POSITION IS THAT IF THE OPPOSITION ADHERES TO ITS DECISION TO OPPOSE THE GOVERNMENT -- REQUIRING THAT THE ISSUE BE SETTLED BY THE DRAWING OF LOTS -- THEN THE NEW ELECTIONS MAY BE CALLED FOR THIS FALL. END UNCLASSIFIED.

3. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. COMMENT: THE GOVERNMENT'S RAISING THE SPECTRE OF EARLY ELECTIONS IS GENERALLY INTERPRETED IN SWEDISH POLITICAL CIRCLES AS AN EFFORT TO EXERT PRESSURE ON THE LIBERAL AND CENTER PARTIES (PARTICULARLY THE FORMER) TO SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT ON ECONOMIC POLICY RATHER THAN A SERIOUS INTENT TO CALL NEW ELECTIONS. THE LIBERALS ARE REGARDED AS VULNERABLE TO THIS TYPE OF PRESSURE; THE MOST RECENT PUBLIC OPINION POLLS PUBLISHED IN APRIL SHOWED THE PARTY'S SUPPORT AT AN ALL-TIME LOW OF ONLY SIX PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS QUESTIONABLE WHETHER EVEN THE LIBERAL PARTY WILL TAKE THE THREAT SERIOUSLY, SINCE UNDER SWEDISH LAW ELECTIONS ARE ALREADY SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 1976, AND THESE ELECTIONS WOULD STILL HAVE TO TAKE PLACE EVEN IF SPECIAL ELECTIONS WERE HELD THIS AUTUMN. POLITICAL OBSERVERS HERE REGARD THE RAISING OF THE ISSUE AS PRIMARILY A GOVERNMENT PLOY TO FORCE THE LIBERAL PARTY BACK TO A POSITION OF SUPPORTING THE GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC POLICY.
STRAUSZ-HUPE

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